



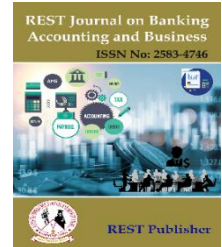
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Influences of social media in travel decision making

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Abstract. *This paper examines the considerable impact of social media on the decision-making processes related to travel. As social media platforms continue to expand rapidly, individuals gain access to a vast range of user-generated content and peer recommendations that significantly shape their travel choices. The study aims to explore how social media platforms influence perceptions, preferences, and decisions regarding travel. It investigates the ways in which platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and travel-specific review sites are utilized by travelers to gather information, share experiences, and connect with others. Additionally, the study looks into the influence of social media personalities, such as influencers and content creators, in shaping travel aspirations and choices. The interactive nature of social media, with features that allow users to seek real-time advice and engage with travel-related content, adds immediacy and personalization to the decision-making process. This research on the role of social media in travel decision-making is vital for various stakeholders, including travelers, the travel industry, and researchers. Understanding this impact enables travelers to make more informed choices by helping them navigate the extensive range of available travel information, aligning their decisions with personal preferences and interests. Insights from this research can assist travelers in enhancing their planning processes by identifying trustworthy information sources, obtaining real-time recommendations, and effectively engaging with social media content and communities to improve their travel experiences. By applying the "Weighted Aggregated Sum Product Assessment (WASPAS)" method, decision-makers can evaluate options across multiple criteria. This involves assigning weights to each criterion, scoring each option, and calculating the overall results to determine the best choice. According to the results, Destination A ranks highest, while Destination E ranks lowest.*

Keywords: *India, Hotels, Social media, Consumer decision journey, Consumer decision-making process*

1. INTRODUCTION

The application of the Engell–Kollat–Blackwell model in understanding international tourists' use of social media for travel decisions in Ghana is a valuable approach to gaining insights into the complex dynamics of the tourism industry. This model, which focuses on the consumer decision-making process, particularly in the context of product selection, provides a structured framework to analyze how international tourists interact with social media platforms when planning their trips to Ghana. In this context, tourists' decision-making processes, starting from problem recognition to information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decisions, and post-purchase evaluations, can be systematically examined through the lens of the model. Understanding how tourists engage with social media platforms, such as Instagram, TripAdvisor, or Facebook, for information gathering, peer reviews, and destination exploration, is essential in shaping marketing strategies, improving destination management, and tailoring the tourism experience in Ghana to meet the evolving needs and preferences of international travelers. By applying the Engell–Kollat–Blackwell model, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to engage with and influence tourists through various stages of their decision-making journey, ultimately promoting Ghana as a desirable travel destination.[1] Social media plays a pivotal role in the decision-making process of international tourists. In today's digital age, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, and others have become invaluable sources of inspiration and information for travelers. Through captivating visuals, personal stories, and peer reviews, social media provides a virtual window into destinations, accommodations, and activities, allowing tourists to explore and evaluate options extensively before making their travel decisions. They can seek recommendations, discover hidden gems, and gain insights into the local culture, all of which influence their preferences. Moreover, travelers can directly engage with local businesses and fellow travelers, asking questions and receiving real-time feedback. This interconnectedness not only

enhances the decision-making process but also contributes to creating more personalized and enriching travel experiences. Consequently, the role of social media in international tourists' decision-making is undeniably significant, shaping the way they perceive and choose their travel destinations and activities.[2] Social media wields a substantial influencing role in consumers' hotel decision-making processes. Today, travelers turn to platforms like Instagram, TripAdvisor, and online review sites to seek real-time, authentic feedback and recommendations. They can visually explore various hotels and accommodations, viewing images and videos posted by both establishments and previous guests. Additionally, reviews and ratings allow potential guests to gauge the quality of a hotel's services and facilities, helping them make informed choices. Social media also fosters a sense of community, as travelers can ask questions, share their concerns, and engage in conversations with other consumers who have stayed at the same hotel. The interactive nature of these platforms creates trust and credibility, influencing consumers' perceptions and decisions. In essence, social media empowers consumers to conduct thorough research, ultimately playing a pivotal role in shaping their hotel preferences and choices, ensuring that their stay aligns with their expectations and needs [3] The influence of e-word-of-mouth, or electronic word-of-mouth, on travel decision-making is significant and varies according to consumer profiles. E-word-of-mouth comprises online reviews, ratings, and recommendations shared by travelers on platforms like TripAdvisor, Yelp, and social media. Different consumer profiles respond to these digital influences in distinct ways. For instance, tech-savvy millennials and younger travelers often rely heavily on e-word-of-mouth, valuing the authenticity and immediacy of peer opinions. They seek personalized travel experiences and are more likely to engage with user-generated content to make informed choices. In contrast, older generations may also consider e-word-of-mouth, but they might place more weight on traditional sources like travel agencies or guidebooks. Business travelers, on the other hand, may prioritize factors like proximity to meetings and conference facilities, but they too rely on e-word-of-mouth for service quality and guest experiences. Ultimately, e-word-of-mouth serves as a powerful influencer across consumer profiles, with the extent of its impact varying depending on individual preferences, age, and the nature of the trip.[4] The role of social media in the travel decision-making process of Generation Y, often referred to as millennials, in the context of a case study in Poland, is undeniably profound. This tech-savvy generation heavily relies on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and travel review websites such as TripAdvisor. In the Polish travel landscape, where a growing number of young travelers are seeking unique and authentic experiences, social media serves as a primary source of inspiration. Millennials use these platforms to explore destinations, accommodations, and local experiences through visually appealing content, user-generated reviews, and recommendations from their peers. They engage with real-time updates, travel blogs, and vlogs to gather insights, discover off-the-beaten-path destinations, and access insider tips. Furthermore, social media enables direct communication with local businesses, allowing them to address queries and concerns. In this way, it shapes every phase of the travel decision-making process, from destination discovery to itinerary planning and booking. The interactive and personalized nature of social media resonates with Generation Y, making it an indispensable tool for shaping their travel choices and enhancing their experiences in Poland and beyond.[5] The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions is significant, and trust plays a pivotal role in the consumer decision journey. Social media influencers, often recognized for their expertise or charisma within specific niches, have the ability to sway their followers' travel choices through compelling content, recommendations, and personal experiences. Followers trust these influencers because of the perceived authenticity in their posts and the relatability of their experiences. The influence extends from destination and hotel recommendations to insights into local culture, activities, and hidden gems. However, the role of trust is paramount; consumers are more likely to act on the advice of influencers they trust and perceive as credible sources. The trust in these influencers often outweighs traditional advertising, as it feels more genuine. As a result, the impact of social media influencers on travel decisions highlights the vital interplay between trust and consumer choices, underlining the importance of genuine, authentic connections between influencers and their audiences in the travel industry.[6] An international study of antecedents related to using Facebook for travel decision-making offers valuable insights into the multifaceted factors that drive this social media platform's influence on global travelers. The term "antecedents" refers to the underlying factors or predictors that lead individuals to utilize Facebook when making travel decisions. Such a study could encompass a range of elements, including cultural differences, demographic variables, social ties, and individual preferences. Cultural differences may play a substantial role, as travelers from different countries may have varying levels of trust in user-generated content or a preference for specific travel-related information on Facebook. Demographics, such as age and education, could also affect the extent to which individuals turn to Facebook for travel insights. Social ties and the strength of one's social network on the platform can influence the reliance on Facebook as a travel resource. Individual preferences for visual content, reviews, or interactions with travel-related pages and groups may shape the decision-making process. Through this international study, a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents of using Facebook for travel decisions can help shape more effective marketing strategies and tailored content to meet the diverse needs of international travelers.[7] The determinants of sharing travel experiences in social media are influenced by a complex interplay of individual and situational factors. Firstly, the intrinsic motivation to share one's experiences

arises from the desire for self-expression and the satisfaction of sharing something meaningful. The visual and emotional appeal of travel experiences often serves as a significant driver. Secondly, the desire to maintain social connections plays a role, as individuals seek to stay connected with friends and family and share their adventures with them. Social validation, through likes, comments, and engagement, also drives sharing behavior. Thirdly, the availability of digital platforms and ease of sharing, coupled with smartphone technology, greatly facilitate the process. Lastly, situational factors like the uniqueness of the experience, the destination's popularity, and the traveler's social media usage habits contribute to the decision to share travel experiences. Overall, these determinants create a dynamic landscape that prompts individuals to share their journeys on social media, shaping the way we document and celebrate our travel adventures in the digital age.[8]Social media has become a pivotal tool in the holiday travel planning process, profoundly impacting travelers' decisions. During the planning phase, individuals increasingly turn to platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, TripAdvisor, and travel blogs for inspiration. They explore destination-specific hashtags, view visually appealing posts, and read reviews to generate ideas and assess the suitability of different destinations, accommodations, and activities. Moreover, the real-time nature of social media allows travelers to seek recommendations, advice, and feedback from their online networks, often resulting in more informed choices. Social media also empowers travelers to curate their itineraries based on the experiences and insights shared by others, promoting a more personalized and enriched travel journey. In essence, social media has transformed the holiday travel planning process, making it more collaborative, visual, and connected, offering a plethora of options and influences to guide travelers in crafting their ideal vacations.[9]A literature review on "Social Media in Tourism and Hospitality" provides a comprehensive examination of the vast body of research and academic work dedicated to understanding the intersection of social media and the tourism and hospitality industries. This review typically covers various aspects, such as the role of social media in destination marketing, customer engagement, and the guest experience, as well as its impact on consumer behavior, reviews, and decision-making processes. It delves into the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities that social media presents to the sector, while also exploring the diverse platforms, strategies, and best practices employed by businesses in the field. Furthermore, the review often highlights the evolving nature of social media and its influence on shaping the dynamics of the tourism and hospitality industries, making it an essential resource for academics, practitioners, and stakeholders looking to harness the power of digital platforms in the modern travel and hospitality landscape[10]The intersection of social media and crisis management in the tourism industry is a critical area of study with profound applications and implications for research. In the context of crisis management, social media platforms serve as real-time communication channels for businesses and destination management organizations to disseminate critical information to travelers during unforeseen events, such as natural disasters or health crises. They also provide a platform for travelers to share their experiences and concerns, shaping perceptions of a crisis and its management. Research in this field can explore the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies on social media, the impact of traveler-generated content on destination reputation, and the role of user-generated content in decision-making during crises. Additionally, understanding the evolving nature of social media and its role in crisis management can inform the development of best practices and guidelines for the tourism industry. Ultimately, research in this area is essential for enhancing preparedness and responsiveness, minimizing the negative impacts of crises, and ensuring the safety and satisfaction of travelers in an increasingly interconnected digital landscape.[11]Social media has revolutionized the way travelers search for travel information. It has become a primary source for gathering insights, recommendations, and inspiration when planning trips. Travelers turn to platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and Trip Advisor to explore destinations, accommodations, and activities. Visual content, shared by both fellow travelers and travel brands, plays a significant role in showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of a destination. In addition, user-generated reviews, ratings, and personal narratives help travelers make informed decisions and gauge the quality of services and experiences. Real-time updates, travel blogs, and vlogs provide a dynamic and interactive way to access the latest information, insider tips, and firsthand experiences, making social media a comprehensive one-stop shop for travel research. The ability to connect with other travelers, ask questions, and seek advice creates a sense of community and adds a social dimension to the information search process, enriching the traveler's journey from the initial search to the actual travel experience. In this digital age, the use of social media for travel information search has become an integral and influential part of the modern travel planning process[12]Social media plays multifaceted roles in influencing tourists' choices of travel components. Firstly, it serves as a source of inspiration, with visually appealing content and personal narratives enticing travelers to explore new destinations, accommodations, and activities. It allows them to envision the experiences they seek. Secondly, social media platforms are invaluable for information gathering. Travelers can read reviews, ratings, and recommendations, aiding in the evaluation of various components like hotels, restaurants, and attractions. The transparency and real-time nature of these platforms empower tourists to make more informed decisions. Additionally, social media fosters a sense of community, enabling travelers to engage with others and receive feedback and advice, thus influencing choices. Finally, it facilitates bookings and reservations directly or through integrated links to travel providers, streamlining the transactional aspects of travel planning. In sum, social

media plays a pivotal role in shaping tourists' choices by offering inspiration, information, social validation, and seamless access to the components that constitute their travel experiences.[13]Social media plays a pivotal role in destination choice, and this influence is underpinned by distinctive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) dimensions. Firstly, Content Quality is a key dimension, as travelers rely on high-quality user-generated content, including photos, videos, and detailed descriptions, to gain insights into potential destinations. The richness and authenticity of this content greatly influence their perceptions and choices. Secondly, Trustworthiness and Credibility are crucial dimensions. Travelers often turn to eWOM shared by individuals they trust, such as friends, family, or influencers with a reputation for honesty and expertise. This trust factor significantly shapes their destination preferences. Thirdly, Interactivity is an important dimension, with travelers engaging in conversations, asking questions, and seeking real-time advice from online communities. The ability to interact with others and obtain personalized recommendations adds an interactive and social dimension to the decision-making process. Lastly, Emotional Appeal is a dimension that cannot be overlooked. Travelers are influenced by the emotional connections they establish with a destination through eWOM, as they read about others' positive experiences and are inspired by the stories and emotions shared. In sum, these distinctive eWOM dimensions collectively contribute to the profound impact of social media on destination choice, making it a dynamic and socially-driven process [14] The moderating effect of social media use on sustainable rural tourism within a Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model explores the impact of social media engagement on individuals' intentions and behaviors related to sustainable tourism in rural areas. The TPB model suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence one's intention to engage in a behavior, in this case, sustainable rural tourism. Social media acts as a moderating factor by potentially altering these variables. Exposure to sustainable practices and eco-friendly initiatives through social media can positively influence one's attitude toward sustainable tourism. Subjective norms can be shaped by online communities and peer recommendations, while social media may provide information that enhances perceived behavioral control, making individuals feel more confident about adopting sustainable behaviors during their rural trips. Integrating social media into the TPB model helps researchers understand how online platforms can affect decision-making and, ultimately, contribute to more sustainable tourism practices in rural destinations [15].

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1 Visual Appeal: "Visual appeal" refers to the aesthetic attractiveness or pleasing quality of something, particularly in the context of visual or graphic design. It is the quality that makes something visually engaging, interesting, or beautiful to look at. Visual appeal can be applied to various things, such as: Graphic Design: Visual appeal is crucial in graphic design, where it involves the use of colors, typography, layout, and imagery to create visually pleasing designs for websites, advertisements, posters, and other materials. Websites: A website with strong visual appeal is more likely to capture and hold the attention of visitors. This can include the use of high-quality images, a well-thought-out color scheme, and a user-friendly layout.

2.2 User Reviews: "User reviews" refer to evaluations and comments provided by individuals who have used or experienced a product, service, or any other offering. These reviews are typically written by consumers or users and are often found on websites, platforms, or forums dedicated to sharing feedback and opinions. Products: Reviews of physical products like electronics, appliances, clothing, and more. Consumers provide feedback on the quality, functionality, and their overall satisfaction with the product. Services: Reviews of services such as restaurants, hotels, hair salons, repair services, and many others. Users share their experiences and rate the service's quality.

2.3 Travel Cost (USD): "Travel cost (USD)" refers to the amount of money, denominated in United States Dollars (USD) that one would need to spend or has spent in order to undertake a specific travel journey or trip. This cost typically includes various expenses associated with traveling, such as: Transportation: Expenses related to getting to and from your destination, which may involve airfare, train tickets, bus fares, car rental, or fuel costs if you're driving. Accommodation: The cost of staying in hotels, motels, hostels, vacation rentals, or any other type of lodging during your trip. Food and Dining: Money spent on meals, including restaurant bills, groceries, and dining out.

2.4 Distance from Home (miles): "Distance from home (miles)" refers to the measurement, in miles, of the physical separation or span between your current location or place of residence (usually referred to as "home") and a specific destination or point of interest. It's a straightforward metric used to quantify the geographical or spatial gap between two places. The concept of "distance from home" is commonly used in various contexts, including: Travel Planning: When planning a trip or journey, knowing the distance from your home to the destination is essential for estimating travel time and making logistical arrangements. Real Estate and Housing: In the real estate industry, distance from home can be a crucial factor for homebuyers. It helps individuals assess how far a potential residence is from work, school, or other amenities.

Method: Using the WASPAS methodology as a foundation, the researchers introduce an innovative approach termed the extended WASPAS method in their research. This approach proves useful in addressing MCDM

problems involving interval type-2 sets of fuzzy values [16]. For the specific case of choosing a time and attendance software system for a private hospital, this study combines the CRITIC and WASPAS techniques. Both techniques employ fundamental mathematical procedures. Notably, different parameters within the WASPAS approach yield consistent alternative rankings in this study. It's worth highlighting that the impact of varying values can be demonstrated through a range of selection problems [17]. In this present study, the researchers recalibrate the fundamental equations and take a fresh look at the concept of assessing correctness within the WASPAS methodology. The investigation has revealed that when we incorporate the expected variation of the Weighted Point Method (WPM), it becomes highly challenging to calculate derivatives with a reasonable level of accuracy. Consequently, a modified formula is put forward, and this proposition is supported by two specific cases. Additionally, computer programs are made available to assist professionals in ascertaining the optimal value and performing calculations for estimated variances [18]. Within the context of Multiple Criteria Decision Making (MCDM), we have introduced a new augmentation of the conventional WASPAS system. This innovative extension, referred to as WASPAS-SVNS, is devised using the conceptual framework of single-valued neutrosophic sets. Its purpose is to facilitate a comparative analysis of outcomes from various MCDM methodologies. Based on the computational outcomes, the Gariunai District in Vilnius emerges as the optimal site for the construction of a non-hazardous waste incineration plant. These results strongly suggest that this location is well-suited for the implementation of the waste incineration project [19]. In the realm of Multiple Criteria Decision Making (MCDM), this study focuses on strategies tailored to Interval-Valued Intuitionistic Fuzzy Sets (IVIFSs). Within the IVIFS framework, a novel approach rooted in the WASPAS methodology has been devised. This method is built upon IVIFS operators, some modifications to the conventional WASPAS approach, and an innovative methodology for determining criteria and decision expert weights. The study introduces inventive techniques for computing the weights of experts and criteria, leveraging interval-valued intuitionistic fuzzy data values, including entropy, divergence, and similarity measures, to ensure precise weight assignments [20]. In addition, a methodology for calculating criteria weights within the constraints of the proposed model, along with a recommended solution approach, has been developed to assess the available alternatives [21]. The most promising path to advance and shape Iran's industrial planning for the future is by incorporating nanotechnology into the field of healthcare and health, as indicated by the findings from the WASPAS methodology [22]. In this study, the Intuitively Fuzzy Weighted Aggregate Sum Evaluation (IF-WASPAS) method is employed to evaluate the performance of the Traveling Salesman Problem (TSP). The IF-WASPAS technique combines the "Weighted Sum (WSM)" and Weighted Product Model (WPM) for decision-making processes, addressing linguistic uncertainty in Multiple Criteria Decision Making (MCDM). To determine criterion weights, the experts' personalized weights are complemented with objective weights obtained through a similarity measuring approach [23]. Furthermore, the research investigates the station selection problem for petrol stations using the recently proposed Spherical Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) integrated with the Spherical WASPAS algorithm [24].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1. Influence of social media in travel decision making

Alternative	Visual Appeal	User Reviews	Travel Cost (USD)	Distance from Home (miles)
Destination A	8	15	1200	400
Destination B	9	12	1500	600
Destination C	7	10	1000	300
Destination D	5	9	1300	500
Destination E	3	8	1400	700

Table 1 shows compare above values Visual Appeal: Destination B has the highest visual appeal score (9), followed by Destination A (8), while Destination E has the lowest score (3). User Reviews: Destination A has the highest user review score (15), followed by Destination B (12), and Destination C has the lowest user review score (10). Travel Cost (USD): Destination C is the most cost-effective option, with a cost of 1000 USD, while Destination B is the most expensive at 1500 USD. Distance from Home (miles): Destination C is the closest to home (300 miles), while Destination E is the farthest (700 miles).

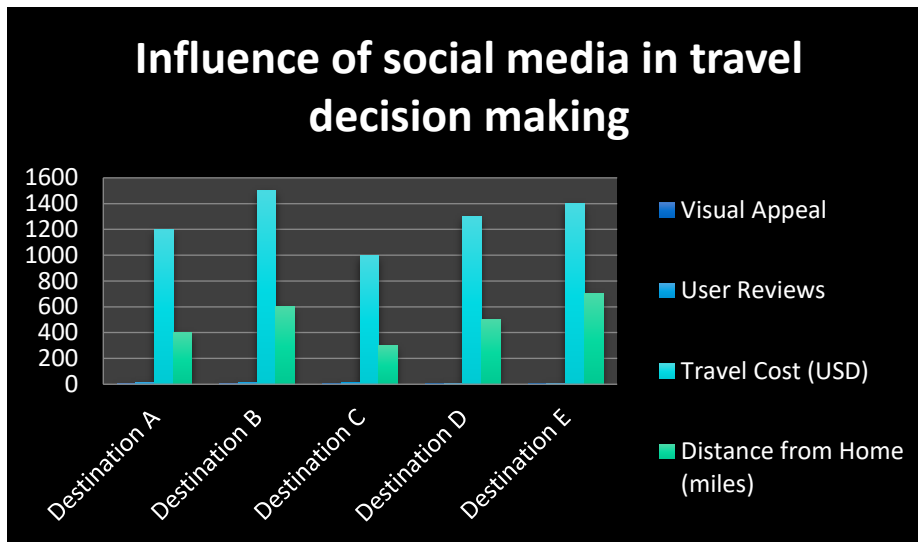


FIGURE 1.Influence of social media in travel decision making

Figure 1 illustrate the graphical representation of Influence of social media in travel decision making

TABLE 2.Performance values

Performance value			
0.88889	1.00000	0.83333	0.75000
1.00000	0.80000	0.66667	0.50000
0.77778	0.66667	1.00000	1.00000
0.55556	0.60000	0.76923	0.60000
0.33333	0.53333	0.71429	0.42857

Table 2 shows the performance value for weighted sum method

TABLE 3.Weight Matrix

Weight			
0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25

Table 3 shows the weight matrix which is taken as same for all the Destinations

TABLE 4.Weighted normalized decision matrix by WSM

Weighted normalized decision matrix			
0.22222	0.25000	0.20833	0.18750
0.25000	0.20000	0.16667	0.12500
0.19444	0.16667	0.25000	0.25000
0.13889	0.15000	0.19231	0.15000
0.08333	0.13333	0.17857	0.10714

Table 4 shows the weight normalized decision matrix for the five types of the alternate parameters and four of the evaluation parameters. It is done using the weight sum method

TABLE 5.Weight Normalized Decision Matrix by WPM

Weighted normalized decision			
0.98268	0.93014	0.95846	0.94507
0.96681	0.93582	0.92440	0.89593
0.92195	0.90051	0.95821	0.93414
0.91311	0.91080	1.00000	1.00000
1.00000	1.00000	0.96850	0.98233

Table 5 shows the weight normalized decision matrix for the five types of the alternate parameters and four of the evaluation parameters. It is done using the weight product method

TABLE 6.Preference Score

Preference Score	WSM Weighted Sum Model	Preference Score	WPM Weighted Product Model	lambda	WASPAS Coefficient
				0.5	
0.868056		0.827941			0.41397
0.741667		0.74932			0.37466
0.861111		0.743137			0.37157
0.631197		0.831659			0.41583
0.502381		0.951389			0.47569

Table 6 shows the Preference Score for five types of destinations. The score is evaluated using two methods I. Weight Sum method , II. Weight Product method. And the WASPAS Coefficient for the Alternatives used here.

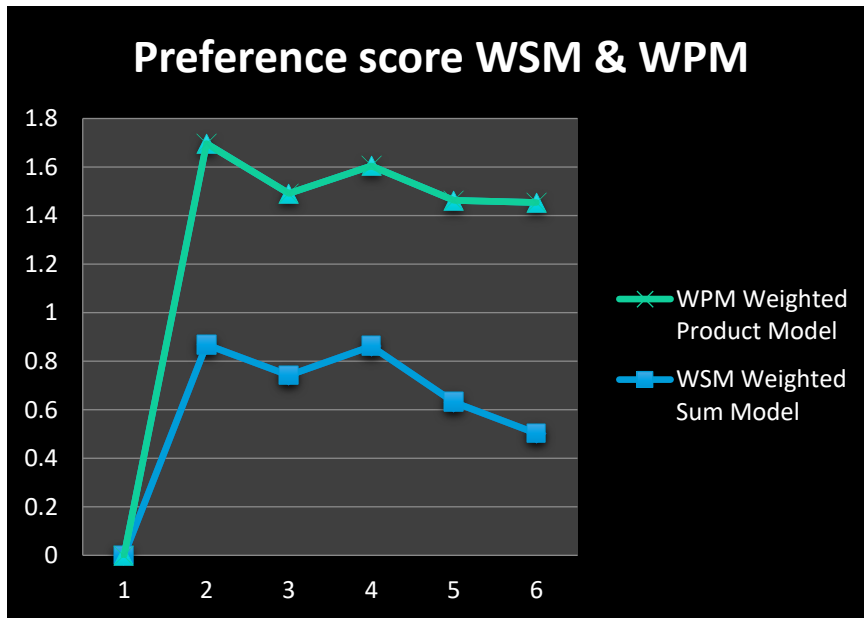


FIGURE 2.preference sc

Figure 2 illustrates the preference score for the alternatives using weight sum and weight product method

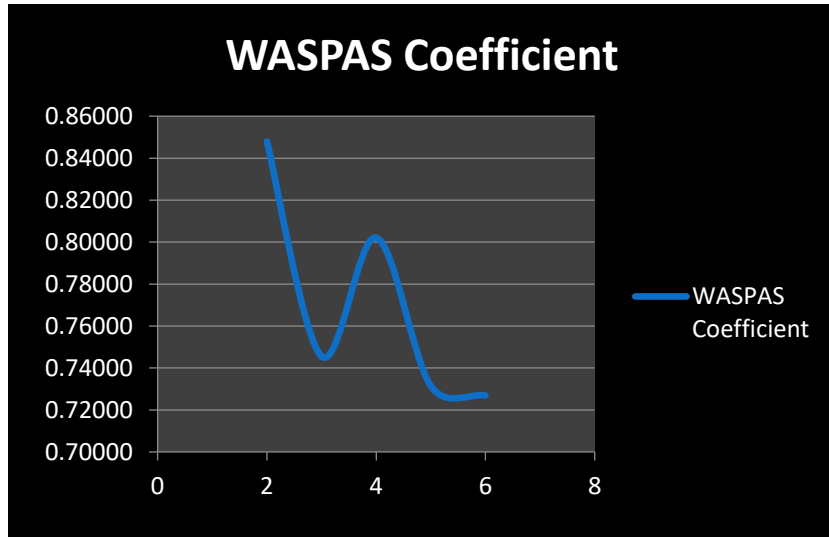


FIGURE 3.WASPAS Coefficient

TABLE 8.Rank

RANK	
Destination A	1
Destination B	3
Destination C	2
Destination D	4
Destination E	5

Table 8 shows the Rank for the five types of alternatives used in this research

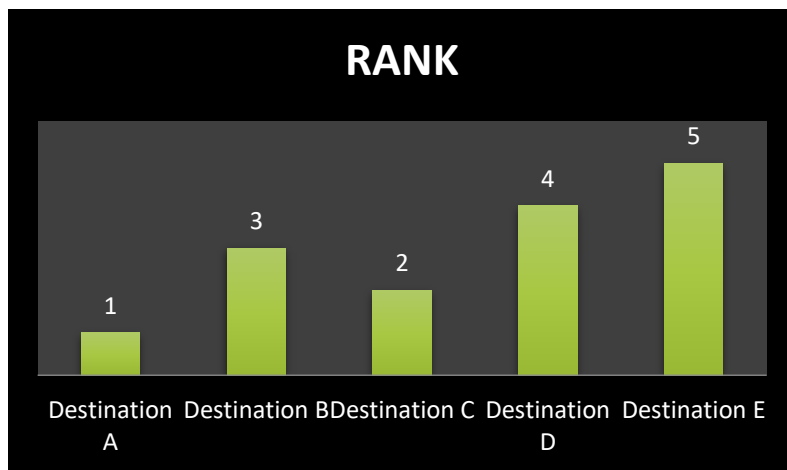


FIGURE 4.Rank for Influence of social media in travel decision making

Figure 5 illustrates the Rank for the Influence of social media in travel decision making. Here the Destination A is in the 1st rank, Destination C is in the 2nd rank Destination B is in the 3rd rank, Destination D is in the 4th rank, and, Destination E is in the 5th rank.

4. CONCLUSION

The influence of social media in travel decision-making is undeniable and transformative. Social media has become an integral part of the modern traveler's journey, shaping the way individuals plan, experience, and share their trips. It serves as a source of inspiration, a platform for information gathering, a space for community and validation, and a tool for booking and reservations. The visual and real-time nature of social media engages and captivates travelers, providing them with a wealth of user-generated content, reviews, and recommendations that significantly impact their choices. In today's digitally connected world, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping travel preferences, influencing destination selection, accommodations, activities, and more. Its role is dynamic and ever-evolving, reflecting the changing landscape of travel decision-making. As we move forward, understanding and harnessing the power of social media will remain essential for businesses, destinations, and travelers alike, ensuring that the travel experience continues to evolve in a connected, informative, and inspiring manner.

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